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A

DISCOURSE

ON THE BEST MEANS OF IMPROVING

THE SCIENCE OF MEDICINE.

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DISCOURSE

ON THE

BEST MEANS OF IMPROVING

THE

SCIENCE OF MEDICINE,

DELIVERED AT THE

ANNIVERSARY OF THE

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON,

IN 1787.

BY JOSEPH HOOPER.

——————ERGO FUNGAR VICE COTIS; ACUTUM
REDDERE QUÆ FERRUM VALET, EXORS IPSA SECANDI:
HOR. DE ARTE POETICA.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE SOCIETY,

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UNIVERSITY
OF BRISTOL
MEDICINE

PREFACE.

AS the following Diſcourſe was intended merely to be delivered before the Medical Society, the Author had not the leaſt expectation of its ever appearing in print, nor would it now have ſeen the light, had it not

not been in conſequence of their reſolution, which he could not, without a breach of good order, reſiſt. He is conſcious, nevertheleſs, that thoſe imperfections which may have eſcaped the ears of an audience, perhaps partially diſpoſed, will be detected in the cloſet of the Critic, who, however, the Author hopes, will at leaſt give him credit for having meant well.

Should its publication tend to excite in men of ſuperior abilities an encreaſe of aſſiduity and zeal for medical inveſtigation,

gation, upon rational principles, his intention will be fully anſwered.

GENTLEMEN,

HOWEVER unequal I may feel myſelf to the arduous taſk of delivering the Annual Oration, yet, prompted by a ſenſe of the duty which I owe to your appointment, I requeſt your wonted candour; whilſt, diſclaiming any attempt to convey inſtruction, or even information, to an aſſembly of men of your education, experience, and abilities, I endeavour to recal your attention to the original inſtitution of this Society; and to animate you with a zeal for the ſucceſs and advancement of its grand object, The art of healing; whoſe votaries have been, through all ages, held in high eſtimation amongſt the wiſe, the great, and the good: for, as Cicero obſerves,

'Homines ad Deos in nulla re propius accedunt, quam ſalutem hominibus dando.'

The Medical Society of London is conſtituted of phyſicians, ſurgeons, and apothecaries. Although ſeveral ſocieties for the improvement of medical knowledge had been ſet on foot, previous to the time of our inſtitution in the year 1773, yet no one, I believe, was formed upon the broad and liberal plan of uniting practitioners of the ſeveral branches of medicine in this metropolis, till the founders of this Society ſet the laudable example; I ſay laudable, becauſe the advantages of a ſtructure built on ſuch a baſis, which are denied by the narrow limits of a more partial and confined one, are too obvious to admit of a doubt.

It cannot, however, but afford pleaſure to every Gentleman who feels an ardent wiſh for the ſucceſs of medical ſcience, as well as the public good which is inſeparable from it, to reflect on the number of ſocieties in London,

London, which have been eſtabliſhed of late years, for the purpoſe of affording their members opportunities of conferring with each other upon any difficult or uncommon caſes, which may have occurred, or of communicating any new diſcoveries in medicine, which have been made by themſelves or others. This liberal intercourſe likewiſe tends to dilate the mind, and enlarge the ideas of individuals; to create a generous ardour and emulation; to kindle into flame the ſpark hitherto buried in diffidence; and diſſipate that ſhyneſs and reſerve, too often obſervable amongſt practitioners, but which are equally diſgraceful to the profeſſion, and incompatible with a liberal mind.

And however unneceſſary ſome may think a reciprocal intercourſe between the phyſician, the ſurgeon, and the apothecary may be, and notwithſtanding Hoffman's * Advice to the Phyſician,

* Med. Polit. Cap. 2.

diſſuading him from entering into familiarity with the Surgeon or Apothecary, yet I ſhall endeavour to prove, that a cordial harmony, in the moſt free and open conference, can alone promote the reputation of the faculty, and their patients recovery. And the phyſician who neglects to make himſelf acquainted with ſo much of ſurgery at leaſt as reſpects external diſeaſes, and the neceſſary applications, is deſtitute of the proper qualifications for his office, and will frequently find himſelf miſerably embarraſſed.

The various hiſtories of phyſic agree, that the ancient phyſicians, from Æſculapius and Hippocrates among the Greeks, to Celſus and Galen among the Romans, practiſed the different branches of medicine. And however neceſſary it may be to ſeparate them in this and other large cities, and however proper it may be that the performing operations, which, ſtrictly

ſtrictly ſpeaking, according to Celſus,* is ſurgery, ſhould be confined to ſurgeons; yet that part which requires the aid of both external and internal remedies, and is called medical ſurgery, ought to be an object of the phyſician's notice and diligent attention: I mean an accurate obſervance, from day to day, of the ſtate of wounds, ulcers, and tumors, in order that he may from thence judge of his patient's habit, and how far his preſcriptions agree or diſagree, and whether the external applications coincide with his curative intention; or whether, on the other hand, they counteract the effects intended to be produced by his internal remedies; by which counteraction the work is marred, the phyſician diſgraced, and the patient fatigued and harraſſed to no purpoſe. For if the phyſician cannot point out where the cauſe lies that retards the cure, he may continue to preſcribe to no end, not

* Præf. Lib. 5.

having attended to the ſtate of ſores, and to the different effects that may be produced by different applications. From careful attention we ſhall generally find that an ulcer affords a true criterion, by which the right mode of treatment may be adopted, according to the ſmell, aſpect and nature of its diſcharge; particularly thoſe of the venereal, ſcrofulous and cancerous kinds, which are readily aſcertained by the tactus eruditus and experienced eye; and without which the phyſiciau will never be able to form a juſt diagnoſtic, or to diſtinguiſh betwixt a multiplicity of diſeaſes which might be enumerated.

Amongſt other phyſicians of the firſt eminence, Boerhaave and his learned commentator Baron Van Swieten agree, that the knowledge and cure of external diſeaſes ought to be the firſt object, as the maſter-key to the knowledge and practice of phyſic. "Adeoque merito pro exiomate haberi poterit, internos morbos

morbos externis congruere, atque nihil ordinati vel veri in praxi medica fieri poſſe, vel doceri, niſi externorum chirurgicorum morborum hiſtoria prius pertractata fuerit, antequam de internis morbis agatur." Sect. 557. Nevertheleſs it is ſaid that ſome (I hope a very few) of our modern phyſicians value themſelves upon their ignorance of ſurgery, as being beneath their dignity. But we do not underſtand that the great Hippocrates thought it beneath his dignity to purſue the dictates of humanity, and of a thorough knowledge of the ſcience he profeſſed. And Celſus declares, that he held that man in moſt eſtimation, whoſe knowledge was moſt extenſive, when he ſays, " Ego eundem quidem hominem poſſe omnia iſta præſtare concipio; atque ubi ſe diviſerunt eum laudo qui quam plurimum percipit." † And indeed I am rather inclined to view ſuch kind of faſtidious behaviour

† Præf. Lib. 7.

as a mark of narrowneſs of ſpirit, as well as of a want of medical abilities, than a proof of true dignity. We likewiſe know that it is no uncommon thing in foreign univerſities, for the profeſſors of phyſic at this day, to adopt ſurgery. The celebrated Le Cat at Rouen, and Pouteau at Lyons, chief ſurgeons to the great hoſpitals in thoſe cities, are likewiſe ſtiled doctors of phyſic, as well as many more illuſtrious characters in France and other parts of Europe. And indeed the College of phyſicians of London plainly admit of the propriety of their practiſing ſurgery; they having an expreſs law, that any of their members may ſo do. "Foraſmuch," it ſays, "as the ſcience of phyſic doth comprehend, include, and contain the knowledge of ſurgery." And in their Diſpenſatory they have directed the compoſition of cataplaſms, ointments, plaſters, &c. for external uſe only.

From

From what has been ſaid, I do not mean that the ſurgeon's province ſhould be limited merely to the performance of operations. On the contrary, I would wiſh that what is called medical ſurgery ſhould likewiſe claim his moſt ſerious attention. Becauſe, in the firſt place, he frequently has the ſole care of his patient; in which caſe the neceſſity of this knowledge muſt be too obvious to need any remark. And ſecondly, becauſe ſhould he be concerned in a conſultation with a phyſician, they may then properly underſtand each other, and proceed hand in hand upon certain fixed principles, for the relief of their patient; who is not likely to be benefited, unleſs there be a right underſtanding between them, as to the nature of the complaint, and the curative indications. For, ſhould a contrary conduct be purſued, the phyſician and ſurgeon may have different ideas, and adopt oppoſite modes of cure. Violent pain,

for

for inſtance, in a diſeaſed limb, may be ſuppoſed by the phyſician to ariſe from an inflammatory diatheſis, and he may therefore treat it with the antiphlogiſtic method; while the ſurgeon, aided by the particular aſpect of the ulcer, is convinced that theſe ſymptoms are owing to an increaſed irritability independent of inflammation, and accommodates his applications accordingly. Here we ſee two practitioners, who, had they acted with that candour and liberality which prefer the good of the patient to any conſideration whatever, might have juſtly deſerved his grateful thanks, uſing oppoſite methods, and pulling different ways, while they are ſacrificing his health to a contemptible piece of pride, and ridiculous etiquette. In ſhort, ſo intimately is the province of the phyſician connected with that of the ſurgeon, that it is difficult to ſay where the one begins, or the other ends. And I doubt not, but you will agree with

with me, that a man cannot be a good phyſician without a practical knowledge of ſurgery, nor can he be a good ſurgeon who is not acquainted with the laws of the animal economy, and general principles of the medical art; according to the opinion of Celſus, who declares, "Omnes "medicinæ partes ita connexæ ſunt, ut "ex toto ſeparari non poſſint."* And I know there are many ſurgeons of eminence, who cultivate, both by ſtudy and practice, this part of their profeſſion; whoſe induſtry and abilities deſerve the public applauſe. And this I look upon as the true eſſence of ſurgery, and am perſuaded that it will redound more to the reputation of the practitioner, in the eſtimation of the diſcerning part of mankind, than the moſt capital operation with whatever eclat it may be performed. Not that I would be underſtood to intend the leaſt depreciation of a dexterous operator. I think thoſe, who by

* Præf. Lib. 5.

practice

practice have acquired a facility in the uſe of the knife, joined to a thorough knowledge of the ſubject, are often highly ſerviceable to mankind. But I am ſorry to remark, that the attention of the generality of ſtudents in our public hoſpitals is ſo much taken up with operations, that they have frequently but little underſtood the nature of the diſeaſes which gave occaſion for them; nor have they applied themſelves to inveſtigate ſuch methods as may in future obviate the dreadful neceſſity for them, or prevent their abandoning their patients; labouring under inveterate ulcers and other ſtubborn complaints, to the random preſcriptions of enterprizing empirics, impoſtors, and water-doctors; to the no ſmall diſgrace of the faculty at large, and the injury of the health of the public.

Pharmacy alſo claims her ſhare of attention, as the knowledge of it appears to be an indiſpenſable qualification of the

the phyſician as well as the ſurgeon; who, unleſs they make themſelves acquainted with the ſeveral qualities of medicines, their mode of compoſition, preparation, and the juſt proportion of their doſes, certainly ought not to preſcribe or apply them. Since then pharmacy is ſo neceſſary to the ſucceſsful practice of phyſic, the benefit which muſt conſequently accrue from the company and aſſiſtance of ſuch as are perfectly converſant with it, muſt be too obvious to need illuſtration; more eſpecially ſince, to the honour of this country, this branch of ſcience has been lately reſcued from a ſtate that was a ſcandal to phyſic, and has been brought into a judicious, conciſe, and elegant ſyſtem. The firſt inſtitution of this Society, therefore, wiſely connected the profeſſors of pharmacy as a part of the body; nor have they been diſappointed of the advantages expected from the uſeful and practical information of ſuch of that claſs as have become members;

bers; more eſpecially, as the generality of apothecaries of the preſent day are men whoſe education has been much more liberal and extenſive than formerly was ſuppoſed to be neceſſary, when they acted in a more circumſcribed ſphere. But ſuch is the cuſtom, and ſuch are the circumſtances of the preſent times, that a large, though not the moſt lucrative ſhare of medical practice, falls into their hands; from which, and particularly from the conſideration of their being called in for the moſt part in the earlieſt ſtage of diſeaſes, they certainly muſt have frequent opportunities, by an attention to the ſymptoms of the acceſs, as well as progreſs, of the complaint, of marking and deſcribing its nature, together with the lædentia and juvantia in each ſtage of it.

A ſociety thus eſtabliſhed, and ſupported by the joint labour of Gentlemen capable and willing to communicate

nicate the reſult of their experience, aſſiſted likewiſe by many learned and valuable correſpondents, both in this kingdom and in various parts of Europe, cannot but promote the philanthropic deſign to which it owes its birth, the advancement of the public good, by improving and enlarging the ſtock of medical ſcience; which, however, I need not tell you is not to be obtained by chimerical, uſeleſs theories, nor volumes of explanations and commentaries upon thoſe theories, though a man ſhould ſtudy them through his whole life. Becauſe the practice of ſuch writers (if they ever had any) is grounded (if I may be allowed the expreſſion) on the baſeleſs fabric of viſionary hypotheſes, the ſallies of diſtempered imaginations. Such, for inſtance, was the practice of one, as related by Dr. Turner in his diſcourſe on Fevers, who ſuppoſed the ſeat of the diſeaſe, whether acute or chronic, was placed ſolely in the primæ viæ; accordingly

ingly the remedies he made choice of were " ſuch as operate only on theſe firſt paſſages, that is, vomits and purges are entertained: and to prepare the way for this very ſingular regimen, you have heard that oils are to be adminiſtered, with a view of ſheathing the parts from the depredations of theſe bilious ſalts, as well as fitting them for expulſion by the ανω και κατω catharſis. Thus has this learned Gentleman, and great naturaliſt, prevailed with many to run this vomiting, clyſtering, and purging gantlet, daily, or each other day, for ſix weeks or two months ſucceſſively, to get rid of a ſuppoſed aqua fortis in their ſtomachs, giving riſe to ſome complaint how diſtant ſoever from the ſame. A vomit over night, a purge the next morning, with an oily enema three or four hours after; next day an oily draught, or a vomit; the day following a purge and an oily enema; and ſo *de die in diem* till the ſick man grows tired, or being quite ſpent,

is

is forced to give over. And this method I have heard alſo has been purſued without regard to the already over-relaxed fibres of the ventricle and inteſtines, the ſlimy ſaburra on the pluſhy coat of the ſame, or phlegmatic infarctions of their glands; much better removed by vomits, where ſuch are wanting, of another kind. —" But ſuch is the perſuaſion of the Doctor, be the ſymptoms whatever, the ſource of the diſeaſe is here; and accordingly down goes the oil to blunt the offending ſalts, then the vomit to diſcharge them."—" I need only remind you of a perſon who told us he had taken ſeveral quarts of oil, two dozen of enemas, with a like number of purges, in leſs than ſix weeks time, to get rid of an iſchiadic diſorder, which ſtill continuing, was afterwards removed by an epiſpaſtic, applied to the pained part, without a grain of phyſic of any ſort."

Not to dwell long on ſo farcical a ſubject, I take the liberty of offering to your recollection another ſingular character,* from the ſame author, who at his firſt ſetting out was reſolved likewiſe to be taken notice of for novelty of opinion; which was, "that our ſtomachs could never abound with too much acid, and that the contrary quality, viz. the alkaline, was the root of diſeaſes, as well fevers as others: hence the orange and vinegar merchants intereſts were to be promoted; the ſpirit of ſulphur and vitriol, the cryſtals of tartar, were like ſalt to ſeaſon all things, and ſour pickles the only condiments to our food. Theſe were to take off the efferveſcence of the blood in feveriſh ebullitions thereof, to incide the viſcous humours, drain away all tartarous ſcorbutic ſalts by the kidneys, fortify and brace the relaxed tone of the ſtomach, excite hunger, promote digeſtion; in a word, to allay

* Dr. Colbatch.

all

all preternatural ferments, ariſing by means of alkalious ſalts. So that, in ſhort, I know no man to whom the following remark of Dr. Friend is more applicable than to this author. * *Eſt et alia huic diverſa inſania, quam inſaniunt non nulli quorum in acidis, poſita eſt omnis curatio: quique ſpem nullam niſi in aceto, aut pomorum agreſtium ſucco collocant, quaſi quia metus ſit ægrotum comburere, ideo protinus frigore enecare oporteat.*

As an antidote, however, to this Gentleman's theory, you might think me deficient, perhaps, did I not ſelect another opinion, equally abſurd, of a more fortunate practitioner, who, we are told, had adopted a quite oppoſite notion, viz. " that an acid was the chief enemy to our Engliſh conſtitutions, and woven as it were in a greater or leſs degree with moſt of our diſeaſes: wherefore it was rare to find a preſcription of this Gen-

* Commentarii de Feb.

tleman's, without one or more of the teſtacea or abſorbent powders, to conflict with this acidity, if not in the blood, in the juices of the ſtomach and inteſtines. Although it will be readily granted, that acidity often predominates in the primæ viæ, depending on the morbid ſtate of thoſe organs, (eſpecially obſervable in arthritic patients, as well as in thoſe whoſe nervous ſyſtem, and ſolids in general, from other cauſes, incline to atonia,) producing ſour eructations, with that painful ſenſation of heat in the ſtomach, called cardialgia, which readily yields to alkaline and abſorbent remedies; as do likewiſe thoſe tormina with which infants are ſo frequently afflicted, (owing, for the moſt part, to the aceſcency of their food, which conſiſts principally of the vegetable kind;; yet, to make this claſs of medicines the baſis of his preſcriptions, as his inſtar omnium in almoſt every diſorder, whether chronic or acute, or how different ſoever they

they may be in their nature, muſt manifeſtly ſhew that this Dr. Alkalinus, though he grew wealthy by his practice, was miſled by the ſtrong influence of an erroneous hypotheſis.

Although every one converſant in the practice of phyſic muſt acknowledge, with me, how much we are indebted to chemiſtry as an auxiliary, more eſpecially in its modern improved ſtate, through the laudable exertions of ſome living characters, by whoſe indefatigable induſtry in experiments philoſophy in general has been ſo greatly enriched; yet many of its profeſſors have not a little retarded the progreſs of medicine, by attempting to impoſe on the world, opinions and definitions the moſt wild and extravagant; whilſt their fondneſs for new diſcoveries, made by the help of fire, led them to eſtabliſh a new philoſophy, and new theories, founded on ſuch principles of action, and ſuch vio-

lent motions, as are incompatible with the laws of the animal economy, and the ſtructure of the human body.

"Thus, (ſays the ſame writer,) one tells us that a fever is nothing more than a predominancy of the ſulphureo-ſaline particles over the ſalino-ſulphureous; a ſecond, that the eſſence thereof depends upon the inordinate elevation or exaltation of the oily or fiery particles, above the terene and watery. Some others have made ſhorter work, as well in the definition as the cure, confidently aſſerting that a fever is nothing elſe but the archæus enraged; and accordingly boaſting of their ſeveral panaceas, or ſedativa, aſſure us, that without any regard to evacuation of morbid particles, or peccant matter, the ſame will allay the tumult, and render all tranquil throughout the animal government."

Nor,

Nor, I fear, ſhall we be leſs bewildered by the jargon of the mechanical phyſicians, notwithſtanding the certainty they pretend to in their theorems, propoſitions, axioms, &c.

It muſt be allowed, indeed, that many great and learned men, amongſt foreigners as well as our own countrymen, have diſcovered an attachment to this ſort of theory; yet ſurely they muſt have been apprized that the want of data would hinder their arriving at any mathematical certainty, conſequently their calculations muſt be very precarious, and the life of the patient equally hazardous.

And although they aſſert that the human body is a machine ſubject both to the laws of geometry and hydroſtatics, that health conſiſts only in a due proportion or right balance between the ſolids and fluids, and that the want of

it conſtitutes a diſeaſe; yet, when upon this principle Des Cartes attempted to apply mechanical reaſoning to the animal economy, and to reconcile the phænomena of the human body to mechanic laws, he invented hypotheſes unfounded on facts and juſt obſervations, and inſtead of eſtabliſhing facts by mathematical demonſtration, bewildered his followers in the labyrinth of falſe logick, and deluſive arguments.

Brief as I have been in the relation of few out of innumerable inſtances of phyſical viſionaries, I ought nevertheleſs to beg your excuſe for taking even ſo much notice of the lamentable perverſion of the rational faculties of men otherwiſe learned, and who, had they not been led out of the certain path of experience, by the faſcinating charms of deluſive theory, might have made a reſpectable figure in the world, and merited the thanks of their fellow-citizens.

But

But ſuch has been the madneſs of the generality of profeſſors, for many hundred years paſt, and ſuch their fondneſs for hypotheſes, for ever changing and veering, according to the pointing of faſhion and novelty, that they have neglected to purſue the method by which Hippocrates obtained ſuch univerſal applauſe, and merited honours; and which, had ſucceeding phyſicians continued to obſerve, inſtead of intermixing falſe philoſophy with true medical knowledge, I make no doubt but that the ſcience of medicine would long ere now have been much farther advanced towards perfection than it is at this day. But while I am condemning theory, I wiſh not to be miſunderſtood, nor can I explain myſelf better than in the words of the late celebrated Dr. Huxham, when he ſays, " I am ſo far from blaming a rational theory in phyſic, that I think it the baſis of all juſt and regular practice; but then it ſhould be, as Hippocrates adviſes,

adviſes, κατα φυσιν θεωρεων. If ever phyſic is to be improved, it muſt be in ſuch a manner, and not by chimerical hypotheſes, nor raſh unwarrantable quackery."

Here, however, I muſt not omit to obſerve, that medicine in reality owes more to the indefatigable Sydenham, than to any one phyſician who has written ſince Hippocrates, who raiſed himſelf into reputation by a great natural ſagacity in making obſervations, and an uncommon candour in relating them; and whoſe works will live, when a thouſand theoretical volumes ſhall be condemned to the baſeſt uſes. But I congratulate you, when I reflect that ſome modern phyſicians are happily arrived at a degree of certainty in their practice; that a liberal and manly ſpirit of inquiry has diſcovered itſelf in medicine, as well as other branches of philoſophy; and that more regard is paid to experiment and

and obſervation, than to idle theory, which is now more eaſily detected and expoſed as the object of contempt and ridicule.

It was the examples of theſe illuſtrious characters that induced the inſtitutors, and, I truſt, the preſent members of this Society, to unite their endeavours for the promotion of our art. And being convinced that a faithful collection of accurate hiſtories of diſeaſes, their various ſymptoms and methods of cure, is the moſt effectual way of doing it, we need not ſay how neceſſary it is that practitioners ſhould deſcribe with the utmoſt care the diſeaſes they would treat of, and the good or bad effects of any method they have uſed to remove them; but in a more particular manner ſhould our attention be directed to any new or uncommon diſtemper which may occur, of which the pathognomonic and diagnoſtic ſymptoms ſhould be carefully laid down,

down, together with obſervations reſpecting the prevailing ſtate of the atmoſphere, previous to and at the time of ſuch diſorder's continuance.

Nor can we too much urge the advantage of inſpecting morbid bodies, (where it can with propriety be done) when we conſider how many new lights it has afforded to the knowledge of diſeaſes, which had formerly puzzled and bewildered practitioners, and what great advantages it has produced to the more ſucceſsful practice of phyſic. For by comparing the ſymptoms of diſeaſes with the cauſes, as diſcovered by inſpection after death, the phyſician carefully obſerving ſimilar circumſtances, has been enabled to trace the complaint up to its ſource, and from thence has become perhaps the happy inſtrument of ſaving the lives of many of his fellow-creatures. Even where the cauſe of the diſeaſe ſhould unfortunately be beyond the reach of the medical

medical art, he will be enabled at leaſt, by a juſt diagnoſtic of the diſeaſe, and prognoſtic of the event, to acquit himſelf of ignorance, and ſupport the reputation of our art in the opinion of by-ſtanders. For inſtance, the hydrocephalus internus, till of late years, was unknown to the generality of the profeſſion; and the practitioner, working in the dark, could only preſcribe at a venture, unable to aſcertain the cauſe, or account for the ſymptoms of a diſeaſe, which conſtantly baffled every effort for the preſervation of his patient, till the late frequent anatomical inſpections informed us of the true cauſe of the fatal cataſtrophe. And though this diſeaſe remains, in the opinion of many able profeſſors, ſtill incurable, yet I am not without a hope, that, having diſcovered the true nature of the diſeaſe, the induſtry of the faculty will not ſuffer them to continue inactive ſpectators of its fatal effects, or be diſcouraged from attempting a cure, founded upon rational

rational principles; eſpecially, ſince ſome ingenious profeſſors have aſſerted their ſucceſs in ſeveral caſes. Nay, I hope to eſcape the imputation of arrogance, if I ſay that more than one inſtance of ſucceſs has come under my notice, where the ſymptoms were ſo ſtrongly marked, and the diſeaſe ſo confirmed, as to leave no doubt of the true cauſe.

This, therefore, among many other arguments, ſhould ſtrongly excite us to ſearch into the myſteries of this moſt ſtupendous machine, the human frame, the moſt deſerving of the attentive reſearches of the contemplative mind; by which we may direct our curative indications upon the ſureſt baſis, and be enabled to ſolve the various phenomena. For ſince phyſic owes its origin to experience, ſo its improvement muſt ariſe from new diſcoveries, either in art or nature. Let us not then ſuppoſe that we are arrived

at

at our ‘ Ne plus ultra,’ or ſlaviſhly reſign ourſelves to the opinion of any one man, however dignified he may be, without handling with our own hands, and ſeeing with our own eyes; the only ſure method of promoting medical knowledge, and of enlarging the underſtanding, as far as the great Author of nature may permit. And, as Lord Bacon obſerves, “ Let great authors have their due, but ſo as not to defraud time, which is the author of authors, and the parent of truth.”

Theſe are the means by which we have hitherto endeavoured to improve each other, and enrich the treaſury of phyſical knowledge; to enlarge the field of ſcience, and promote the ſalus populi. Nor, I truſt, have our time and attention been idly ſpent, or our endeavours fruitleſs: of this, however, our approaching publications will ſoon give the world an opportunity of forming their judgment.

Let

Let us not ſlacken in our induſtry and attachment to ſo noble an object, and ſo worthy of the purſuit of the ſcholar, the gentleman, and the Chriſtian; but let that flame, which firſt excited us to aſſociate for ſo laudable a purpoſe, continue to burn in proportion to our ſucceſs. And notwithſtanding the inſtability of many laudable inſtitutions, from the verſatility and caprice of human nature, it muſt afford the higheſt ſatisfaction to ſee, in this reſpectable aſſembly, its founders, its fathers, and its friends, continuing their exertions for its proſperity, with the ſame ardour which animated them in its infancy, and which, I doubt not, will pervade the breaſts of every worthy member, in order to ſupport, ſtrengthen, and lead it on to maturity. Nor muſt we paſs over unnoticed the valuable acquiſition by which this Society is enabled ſtill farther to extend its views, by exciting an honourable emulation in men of leiſure and abilities,

of

of all nations, in holding up an annual honorary reward. I need not tell you, Gentlemen, that I mean the Fothergillian Medal; which, whilſt it tends to perpetuate the name of a late celebrated phyſician, and draw forth the exertions of ingenuity and learning, calls for the grateful acknowledgment, not only of this Society, but of the public at large, to the generous donor; concerning whom, however, delicacy muſt here repreſs our inclination to eulogy, more eſpecially ſince our wiſhes are anticipated by the voice of fame.

But let us ſtill keep in view that our improvements and acquirements are not merely to be ſought as an offering at the ſhrine of wealth or ambition, ſince thoſe, whoſe humble ſituation affords no pecuniary return, have a ſtrong claim to our benevolent advice and aſſiſtance; the liberal communication of which, while it reflects true dignity and honour upon

the profeſſion, will be rewarded with the grateful bleſſing of the poor: a reward more pleaſing to the feelings of humanity than the purſe of the affluent can afford, and more conducive (in the cool moments of reflection) to the "mens ſibi conſcia recti," or as our Engliſh poet has it,

"The ſoul's calm ſunſhine, and the heart-felt joy."

And now before I come to a concluſion, I hope you will not think me deviating too far from the main object, while I expreſs my abhorrence of a charge which is too often wantonly urged againſt the profeſſors of phyſic, and attempt to repel its poiſonous ſhafts. It is the charge of a total diſregard to religion, of infidelity, and even atheiſm; a calumny which, I think, nay, will venture to aſſert, is as groundleſs as it is derogatory from the moſt illuſtrious characters,

racters, among the ancients as well as moderns. Even the great Hippocrates could not eſcape the infamous accuſation of atheiſm, notwithſtanding he has given evident proofs of its falſity, by having poſitively aſſerted in his writings, that all events which were eſteemed fortuitous, were under the Almighty's immediate direction, in oppoſition to thoſe who maintained the exiſtence of chance. And amongſt many other writers, who have ſucceſsfully vindicated his religious ſentiments from ſuch foul aſperſions, we are told, " that a Venetian phyſician, named John Stephano, publiſhed a work at Venice, in the year 1638, wherein he proves, that the tenets of this phyſician, as well as thoſe of Plato and Ariſtotle, agreed much with the Chriſtian religion." Hiſtory likewiſe informs us, that Galen, obſerving and contemplating the ſkeleton of a human body, was ſo far ſtruck at the amazing contrivance of its machinery, that, being filled with admiration at the wiſdom and goodneſs of

his Creator, he compoſed a hymn in his praiſe. But had that great naturaliſt, and celebrated phyſician, been preſent at the diſſection of a recent ſubject, aſſiſted with the knowledge of the circulation, and the numberleſs other diſcoveries made ſince his time, he would have had much more reaſon to ſing praiſe for the infinite wiſdom manifeſted in the admirable contrivance of ſo ſtupendous a fabric; in which there is no part that does not carry evident marks of a divine Architect, ſeeing that their forms and ſtructures are as inimitable, as their uſes and operations are wonderful. If we reflect upon the diverſity of motions the ſeveral organs perform; to what different uſes they are aſſigned, and from what different ſources they ariſe, and yet with what order, ſtrength, and regularity they are performed; if we conſider how all our actions and functions are carried on, by organs ſo nicely conſtructed, and ſo exactly figured, that they appear rather calculated for beauty than uſe; we cannot

but

but conclude, with Galen, that they are the evident characteriſtics of the preſence of a divine and omniſcient Power. Nor is it leſs wonderful, that a machine, formed of ſo many ſlender and periſhable materials, and ſubject to ſuch a variety of complicated motions, actions, and uſes, ſhould continue ſo long a period of time as the life of man, without more extraordinary irregularities and diſorders.

Among the moderns who have done honour to the cauſe of piety, as well as learning, we may inſtance the celebrated Hervey, whoſe memory will be venerated to the lateſt poſterity. The learned Boyle likewiſe, who not only conſiderably enlarged the ſcience of medicine, in many of his works, but publiſhed a book called the Chriſtian Virtuoſo, expreſsly to prove how much Chriſtianity is ſupported by experimental philoſophy; and alſo left a fund for a Courſe of Sermons, to be delivered annually, for the purpoſe of

of defending revealed religion againſt infidels of every claſs. Nor muſt we omit Sydenham, Arbuthnot, Boerhaave, Stahl, Hoffman, and many others, who have no leſs diſtinguiſhed themſelves for their attachment to religion, than for their eminence in the medical profeſſion. Even if it were not beyond the limits of the preſent occaſion, I feel myſelf indeed incapable of diſplaying the wonders, which in the widely-extended field of nature aſtoniſh the eyes of thoſe who attentively contemplate her works, eſpecially in the conſtruction of the human frame. And though they are more than ſufficient to diſcover the finger of Omnipotence, and overthrow the moſt ſubtle plea of ſtubborn atheiſts, yet there ſtill remain ten thouſand hid from the microſcopic eye. Nor indeed would one think it poſſible, that the ſtudy of medicine, which muſt raiſe the mind to the moſt ſublime conception of the Supreme Being, could fail of producing a firm conviction of the grand truths of religion;

religion; for, as an ingenious phyſician* has obſerved, "Perhaps it may even be ſaid, that divines meditate on God, and phyſicians behold him."

Impreſſed with theſe ſublime truths, let a conduct worthy of our profeſſion, put to ſilence thoſe ſhameful aſperſions, and convince the world, that in proportion as we advance in medical ſcience, we become the advocates of piety and virtue. And though infidelity may point the finger of ridicule, we ſhall view her feeble efforts with contempt, and defy her envenomed darts, conſcious of the approbation and eſteem of the judicious and thinking part of mankind; who then will ſay with the wiſe ſon of Sirach, that "the ſkill of the phyſician ſhall lift up his head, and in the ſight of great men he ſhall be held in admiration."

* Dr. Kirkpatrick.

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